



APD NEWS

Public Information Office: (512) 974-5017

715 E. 8th St. Austin, Texas 78701

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Public Information Office, 974-5017

Lottery Fraud – Convenience Store clerk deceived customer and Cashed \$1,000,000 ticket.

On May 29, 2009, Willis Willis purchased a Mega Millions Lottery ticket from a convenience store in Grand Prairie Texas for the May 29, 2009 drawing. Willis has been a regular customer of this store for a number of years. On May 31, 2009, Willis returned to the same store and requested the clerk to check the Mega Millions ticket, and two others, to see if any of them were a winning ticket. The clerk, later identified as Pankaj Joshi, told Willis that one of the tickets was a two-dollar winner, and paid Willis \$2.

On June 25, 2009, Pankaj Joshi presented the winning Mega Millions ticket to the Texas Lottery Commission in Austin. The Texas Lottery Commission validated the ticket as having a winning value of \$1,000,008. After completing claim forms and having the ticket validated, the Texas Lottery Commission wire transferred the after tax amount of \$750,006.00 to Pankaj Joshi's bank account.

Other employees of the convenience store became suspicious of Joshi when they learned that he was the winner of the \$1 million prize, and called their suspicions into the Texas Lottery Commission. Investigators with the Texas Lottery Commission investigated the case and were able to determine through a pattern of behavior and timing that the legitimate purchaser of the ticket was in fact, Willis. The Lottery Commission investigators then presented their findings to the Travis County District Attorney's Office.

The case was assigned to the White Collar Crime Unit, which is a task-force unit consisting of the Austin Police Department, Travis County Sheriff's Office, and District Attorney Personnel. The White Collar Crime Unit continued the investigation and discovered additional evidence and that there was still a substantial amount of money held in U.S. banks. Detectives from the Austin Police Department served a series of search warrants on these banks and were able to recover over \$365,000 of stolen money.





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A Travis County grand jury indicted Joshi for the offense of claiming lottery prize by fraud, a second-degree felony. Joshi's bond is set at \$10,000,000. Joshi is considered a fugitive from justice.

Media Advisory: An Austin Police Department Detective will be available at APD Headquarters at 1 p.m. today for an interview.

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